Selections from

# Catullus

Translated by

Mary Stewart

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Translated into English verse with an Introduction on the theory of Translation

BY MARY STEWART


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To my Sister
L. S. B.

*Oh, Sister of mine, so beloved,*
*Oh, dear heart of my heart, can it be*
*You are dead, you are gone,*
*And the world still goes on*
*In darkness unending for me?*

*They buried the gold of the sunshine*
*With the gold of your beautiful hair,*
*And the blue of the skies*
*With the blue of your eyes,*
*Ah, nothing is left that was fair!*

*And you—is it well with you, Sister,*
*You who so loved the breeze and the light,*
*And the laughter and love*
*And the glad life above,*
*Down there all alone in the night?*

*Ah, God, is there never an answer?*
*Can't she hear, though in anguish I cry?*
*Little soul, fair and white,*
*Lost and lone in the night—*
*Dear God, can such loveliness die?*

*Then glad like a flower in the spring time,*
*With the gold of the sun in her hair,*
*And the blue of the skies*
*In her wonderful eyes,*
*Is she waiting for me somewhere?*

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CATULLUS

# CATULLUS

*An Experiment in Translation*

IN offering new translations of the classics the translator anticipates the critics Why-did-you-do-it? by hastening to explain himself. Hence the prologue. In fact, no one can play much with translating without pretty seriously asking himself why he does it, and thereupon finding himself hopelessly tangled in a mesh of questions about the place of translations and the art of translating.

There can no longer be any question about the place of translations in modern literature. All ancient literature and all modern, in any tongue save English, are accessible to the great mass of people only in translation. We may talk as we please about the beauty of the original and the impossibility of adequate translation, but the fact remains that for most of us it is translation or nothing. Nor is this altogether regrettable. Even if it were possible for all of us to learn Latin and Greek well enough to read the great epics, it would scarcely be worth while for all of us to do it. Though the scholar has his place, and a very necessary one, no language

can ever mean to us what our own language does, not even a modern, living tongue; and, if this is true of a living tongue, what is to be said of a dead one? Even the scholar who knows his Greek so well that he reads Homer instead of translating him, and has an ear so atuned to the sonorous phrase that he enjoys its music, must still read the stirring epic as an English man, not as a Greek; as a modern, not as an ancient. And however rich his knowledge of etymology, it cannot fuse with life the dead word of a dead people. Language is a living, growing thing, quivering, glowing, moving, connected by a thousand-thousand invisible capillaries with the life of today. For the English person the English language has a subtlety of meaning and a richness of connotation that no other tongue can possibly have. It is bound up with his experience, not only racial but personal. The power of a word is measured by myriad influences, drawn from every experience with which it may be associated in the mind of the individual. And the beauty of literature is so dependent on this unexpressed meaning of word and phrase we dare to say no original in a dead tongue could give to an English ear the aesthetic pleasure of a good translation.

A *good* translation—"Aye there's the rub." Mathew Arnold in his scholarly essay, "On Translating Homer," has set up a standard of translation

which, according to Mr. Calvin Winter (In *The Bookman* for March and April, 1911), has been guilty of fastening a lot of bad translations. Mr. Arnold says that the first requisite of a good translation is faithfulness to the original. With this we heartily agree. It is when he defines his criterion for faithfulness that we must differ from him. There has been current for a long time the idea that a good translation is one which would affect the English reader as the Greek or Latin original affected a Greek or a Roman. As Mr. Arnold points out, this is an impossible standard, because nobody knows just how the original affected the ancients. However, we feel that the test Mr. Arnold himself imposes is scarcely less possible. To his mind the taste of the scholar is the test—the good translation the one that affects this Greek or Latin scholar as the original does. The man who knows his Greek is the judge. Mr. Winter points out the fallacy of this criterion as follows: "It is difficult to imagine any method for getting away more completely from the original spirit of the Iliad than to so translate as to have it give to the average modern reader the same impression that it makes upon the typical middle-aged professor of dead languages." These standards, he farther adds, "are precisely those which tend to develop a school of glorified cribs. . . . The translations that live, the transla-

tions that we like to think of as a part of English literature, are of a different sort. They are from the pen of writers who have made their names glorious for something besides the echoing of other men's thoughts, and who have insisted, even in their translations, on remaining original. . . . Translations have a vitality and a vogue in direct ratio to the writer's spirit of independence." This judgment of Mr. Winter is substantiated by some of the best translations in English. They have been made by men who were literary artists as well as scholars.

Let us discuss for a moment what we mean by a good translation. Obviously the first aim of the translator is to make a faithful translation. On this point there is practically a general agreement. A faithful translation is one that is true to the idea and spirit of the original rather than to the word and letter. The method of the translator will vary according to the subject matter and the purpose for which the translation is intended. There are two kinds of literature: (a) the literature of information and (b) the literature of beauty. Plainly, in the translation of the first class the ideal is one of accuracy and clearness. This, of course, is comparatively easy, presupposing, on the part of the translator, merely a knowledge of the foreign language (and, we may add incidentally, of his own), and a thorough understanding of the subject matter

in hand. The translation of the second class—pure literature—involves an additional quality which, for want of a better term, we may call literary sensibility. The translator must make not merely a transcript of the idea but a species of *belles lettres,* a sort of new creative thing in itself. The function of pure literature is to please and interest no less by its form than by its content. Hence a good translation of a masterpiece must be in itself a kind of masterpiece. "As it takes a thief to catch a thief, so it takes a poet to catch a poet."

We approach any translation from three points of view—first, the purely scholarly view point whose ideal is accuracy and thoroughness. This seeks a pretty literal translation, one that will keep the facts as straight as possible, and it is the primary essential of all good translation. Second, the scholarly-literary view point, which aims not only at an accurate transcript of ideas but at an appreciation of them in relation to their own setting. This means keeping the "flavor" of the original, translating one-self, so to speak, into the past rather than the original into the present. This too, is an essential quality of a good translation. And third, the purely literary view point, which would make of the original a "new original," a bit of real literature which, while true to its source, is equally true to its end; that is, faithful to the original and *sig-*

*nificant to the reader.* This last viewpoint involves and implies the other two. The needs of scholarship may often go no farther than accurate translation and appreciative interpretation, but without the literary "touch," they will fall short of true translation. For herein lies the life-giving property that must animate the solid framework of scholarly information, and color and illuminate the grace and form of scholarly appreciation. This is the translator's contribution to literature. The scholar's work merely goes to pile the shelves of fact, to heap up the raw material out of which real literature is made.

What are the ear marks of a good translation? (1) It must be interesting to the generation for which it is written, must speak straight from the heart, direct and spontaneous, in the idiomatic English of the day, bearing no halting syntactical hybrids; (2) it must be true to the original in fact and in spirit, carrying the same dignity, nobility, grace, or whimsicality that the original bore. And for this end a literal translation is often the last thing wanted, either of word or of form. For example—well-bred Romans might have listened with equanimity to certain words that shock a well-bred American. To translate literally the word that was in the original would be to translate the shock which was not in the original; and this would be

faithless. Again certain figures, allusions, and the like, full of significance to the people for whom they were written may fall quite empty on a modern ear. It is for the translator, then, to find for these adequate substitutes or paraphrases as far as possible. For example, Catullus LII reads literally—"What reason is there, Catullus, why you should delay dying; vile Nonius is in the curule chair, Vatinius swears by the consulate, why then, Catullus, do you delay dying?" In translation, a meaningless and offensive lot of words truly, but in the original, pointed, trenchent, clever. Catullus used the specific names Nonius and Vatinius because to the ears of his generation concrete examples of debauchery and bribery illustrated in the names of prominent citizens were far more vigorous than abstract terms. But these names mean nothing to us. The abstract qualities say far more. So we have translated the lines as follows—true to the spirit, we maintain, and certainly clearer to the reader.

*Why wait for death, Catullus, why not be*
*done with life?*
*Corruption in the Curule chair, and in*
*The Senate strife.*
*Venality is honored, and bribery is rife,*
*Why wait for death, Catullus, why not be*
*done with life?*

On the other hand, to have substituted modern names for Nonius and Vatinius would have been going too far, would have destroyed the flavor, and produced a paraphrase not a translation.

The translator's task is indeed a difficult one, one calling for versatile abilities. He must find the phrase that will contain the spirit as well as transcribe the fact. He must be *en rapport* not only with the language itself but with the *milieu* of that language, must be a part of its vitality, so to speak, and understand and know its contemporaneous significance. One generation does not fully understand the literature of another of the same tongue without more or less copious annotations, which are in themselves a kind of translation. We can't read Chaucer without a glossary, nor Shakespere without notes. How then shall one nation comprehend another without annotations, or one age grasp another without such illumination. A good translation is a kind of condensed and concatenated annotation. After all, we keep on translating whether we know it or not, all the time. There isn't much new knowledge; there's just a lot of fresh thinking about old subjects. And each generation keeps on translating the thoughts of the last into its own vernacular. Hence arises the need of new translations of old classics. Virgil translated for the seventeenth century might not be just Virgil to the twentieth, and

we see Homer with glasses colored by a somewhat different experience from that of Pope. It is not strange, therefore, if we should want to make our own translations.

Catullus has something different for us from what he has had for any other people at any other time, and so we want to interpret him in our own way. That people keep on translating Catullus is reason enough why they should. He has something for them or they wouldn't take the trouble. That a writer does live is reason enough for his immortality. It is to be expected that he have a sort of vogue, a rise and wane of popularity. Ages are different, and one age's vogue is another's aversion.

Next to Horace, Catullus seems to us the most modern of the ancients—that is, if there is any most. They are all contemporaries when we get acquainted with them. It is amazing to find out how modern all these writers are, which is just another way of saying how ancient human nature is. "As it was in the beginning, is today official sinning," chants Mr. Kipling, "and shall be forevermore." It is this continuity of human nature that gives us a friendly feeling for the classics. All the big feelings are the same, and the little ones aren't so surprisingly different; rather they are surprisingly alike. Common follies strike quicker sympathies than common virtues; congenial foibles and

superficial graces offer a readier intimacy than fundamental principles. We can weep with anybody. Grief is universally the same; but we laugh only with those who understand. It is just here that Catullus is so "modern." He saw the grace in things, in manners, customs, fashions, politics and society. In short, for all the intimacies of daily living he had a quick eye and a felicitous phrase. Not only did he feel the passion and pathos of life, but he was keenly sensitive to all the nuances of light and graceful feeling, and it is in delicate appreciation of the finer sentiments that Catullus excels. His incite is less profound than that of Horace but it is more subtle. Keenly alive, quiveringly sensitive to all that touches a human being in emotional experience, he had pre-eminently what Burns would have called sensibility. And he is like Burns, too, has more in common with him than with any other lyric poet, unless it be Shelley. In life he was circumstanced more like Shelley, a gentleman in birth and breeding, well educated and wealthy, in spite of the "cobwebs" in his purse, the result rather of extravagance than poverty. In temperament he was more like Burns, wild and turbulent in passion, fierce in love and relentless in hate. And when he took to satire and invective he out-Burnsed Burns. At times he was so coarse, brutal, and indecent it is hard to believe he could ever be gentle, graceful,

and noble. However, we must remember the age allowed excesses of speech we would not tolerate. By nature he was intense, yet simple and ingenuous; by education, refined, sensitive, and exquisite. Love was at once with him a mighty passion and a delicate sentiment. While he touched the superficial graces—and disgraces—of living in a half playful tone, life was to him always a tremendous emotion. *Amo et odi,* he sang, and this was the index of his temperament. There was nothing lukewarm about him. He loved his friends and hated his enemies—joyed with the mad rush of a mountain torrent and sorrowed with the weight of a deep sea dirge. Perhaps no one can write lyric poetry who does not live intensely.

Few facts are known of the life of C. Valerius Catullus. He was born at Verona, or near there, about B. C. 84 and died at Rome thirty years later. The dates of his birth and death are variously given, but the divergence is not wide. B. C. 87-84 for the birth; B. C. 57-54 for the death. He was contemporary with Cicero and Lucretius.

There is reliable evidence that he was of good family, since his father was the friend and host of Caesar; that he had wealth, for he owned a yacht and two or three country estates, a villa at Sirmio and another on the edge of the Sabine hills. At an early age he went to Rome where he mingled with

the gay and extravagant society of the period. Here he found many friends, notably Cornelius Nepos to whom he presented his volume of lyrics in the graceful little dedicatory poem, Cicero, Fabullus and Veranius, and chiefest in his own eyes and closest to his heart, Licinius Calvus, a young poet like himself, to whom he adressed some of his most charming verses. (XIV, LIII, XCVI).

When he was about twenty-six years of age, he went to Bithynia on the staff of C. Memmius who was propraetor of the province. It was on taking leave of this province that, stirred by the wanderlust of youth and spring, he wrote the exquisite little lyric numbered XLVI. And the greeting to "fair Sirmio" celebrated his return home in lines no less beautiful. Sensitive to every shade of emotion as he was, it is not strange that he should have written feelingly of both extremes. Those who best know Wanderlust best know Heimweh.

It was likely too, on his journey to Bithynia, that he visited the tomb of his brother in the Troad, that brother so deeply loved and so tenderly mourned in many of his verses and chiefly in the Apostrophe at his grave (CI). In all elegiac literature is there nobler affection or deeper grief told so briefly and so simply as in these lines?

Perhaps the most conspicuous and indubitable fact of the life of this poet was his love for a certain

Roman lady whom he calls Lesbia and who, the critics think, was Clodia, the wife of Q. Metellus Celer and the sister of the notorious P. Clodius Pulcher. Whoever the lady actually was is of rather little moment as far as the poetry is concerned. Sufficient to say she inspired Catullus with an overmastering passion which fluctuated between heights of bliss and depths of woe, finally culminating in complete despair when he was convinced of her faithlessness.

It is not because Catullus loved Lesbia that we are interested in her, but because this experience taught him to write love lyrics of surpassing beauty. And here, just a word about "internal evidence," that scholarly temptation to unrighteousness. It is amazing how men otherwise honest will turn their imaginations loose on "internal evidence" and deduce therefrom the most egregious lies in the shape of specific facts. Internal evidence should be taken, in the main, for evidence internal; i. e., an evidence of the internal life of the writer and not as a witness of his outward acts and relationships. That a poet writes one or more love lyrics to fifty different Lydias and Phyllises does not prove in the least that he has as many mistresses, nor even that all or any of such lyrics were written to particular. women. Nor does it necessarily imply that he was fickle or constant. All that it actually proves, with-

out indubitable circumstantial evidence, is that he knew much of love in many phases, its joys, its jealousies, its pains, its pettinesses, etc. And it is fair to suppose that he learned it from more or less actual experience. However, just what experiences, or when, or where, is a pretty bold assumption without a deal of corroborating evidence. A particular poem may have been prompted by the caprices of a friend, by a passing observation, by a hint from a book, a play, a thousand and one things besides a specific experience of jealous love or wounded vanity. And many poems have no doubt been inspired by the very lack of the passion they describe, which, denied, finds solace in imagination. The satisfied lover needs no poem of ecstacy; his beloved is his poem. The despairing lover needs no verse of woe; his broken heart is his cry. It would not do to push this theory to its ultimate logic, but there is something in it. However, we merely want to emphasize the absurdity of attempting to fix a specific experience to an expressed sentiment, while granting that one who writes profoundly of an emotion has known it from experience, which is exactly what we mean by "internal evidence." But that a particular flesh-and-blood Phyllis jilted the poet on the particular morning in May on which he sings is far-fetched. There is a deal too much of this kind of evidence in the biographies of Catullus; more than

the facts allow.

About a hundred and twenty lyrics are extant (many of them very short) that, with good authority, can be assigned to Catullus. They touch all kinds of subjects, whimsical, delicate, tender, passionate. One of the most graceful, for example, is written on the death of his sweetheart's pet bird; another to a friend who has sent him a book of bad verse. There is a tender and touching lament at the tomb of his dead brother; a biting lampoon on the bad manners of a social parasite who stole a napkin at a dinner; and dozens of love lyrics, ecstactic, ardent, brimming with joy, weighted with grief, or lightly and gracefully whimsical. These lyrics run the whole gamut of erotic experience.

It is this range of feeling that gives Catullus immortality. He is not great in the sense that Virgil or Horace is. He lacks the lofty idealism of the one, the broad philosophy of the other. But if he is not humanly great he is greatly human. You read Virgil with reverence and inspiration; Horace, with relish and delight; Catullus with joy and tears. Like Burns, he touches the hearts of men, and the human heart does not change very much. Two thousand years ago this young Roman, hot blooded, tender hearted, sensitive souled, poured out his life in song. Simple they were, these songs, ingenuous and sincere. Today we read them with emotion,

for we understand the feeling, though we cannot sing the songs. There is a felicity in song-making God-given. Most of us write with ink; Catullus dipped his pen in fire and dew—and sometimes venom. Burns knew the art, and so did Heine. There's a man of Catullus' stripe—Heine. Song-makers—those three—and they sent the singing word down the ages to set men's heart strings throbbing in accord.

And so we con Catullus' Latin lyrics. They have something for us still, a melody and a theme transcending language, or rather, belonging to all language. That is why we try to translate them, to transfer the idea and the tone to a medium that will reach the modern ear, preserving the flavor of the original as far as possible, changing word, phrase, and figure to fit today's way of expressing itself when touched by the same world-old passion. This we do not claim to have succeeded in doing, but it is what we have tried to do. It may be thought over-bold to translate *ad claras Asiae volemus urbes* (XLVI) into:

*Dawn flames crimson, luring eastward,*
*Asia's magic blooms unfold,*
*Golden cities nod and beckon,*
*Who can tell what joys they hold?*

However, in our opinion, this is just what trans-

lation requires. For while the original has no such images, it has a tone, flavor, or whatever you may call it, that suggests them, and the translation must meet this in some way.

Translations are often failures because they sound like translations. To translate the word and not the thought is false; to catch the thought and miss the spirit is no less false; and to make labored what was spontaneous is falsest of all. Therefore, the translation must have a kind of spontaniety of its own, an English originality, as it were. Thus we have used rhyme where the Latin does not because in English the lyric quality of verse largely depends on rhyme. And in this faith have we taken such liberties of interpretation.

Another generation will no doubt essay its own translation. We have written as we have read.

*The University of Montana,*
*Missoula,*
*January, 1915*

# SELECTIONS FROM CATULLUS

# CATULLUS

## I

To whom shall I offer this book, young and sprightly,
Neat, polished, wide-margined, and finished politely?
To you, my Cornelius, whose learning pedantic,
Has dared to set forth in three volumes gigantic
The history of ages—ye gods, what a labor!—
And still to enjoy the small wit of a neighbor.
A man who can be light and learned at once, sir,
By life's subtle logic is far from a dunce, sir,
So take my small book—if it meet with your favor,
The passing of years cannot dull its sweet savor.

## II

Sweet bird, my Lady's dear delight,
Her breast thy refuge fair;
Ah, could'st thou know thy happiness
To be so sheltered there!

She gives her dainty finger tip
To thy sharp little bill
In sportive play—a ruse, I trow,
Her longing love to still.

Ah, would that I, like her, might give
Such solace to my grief,
Might cool my absent heart's fierce fire
In such a sweet relief.

## III

Let Venus bow her head in grief,
And tears drown Cupid's eyes in sorrow,
And men of feeling everywhere
Forget to smile—until tomorrow.

My lady's little bird lies dead,
The bird that was my lady's prize
And dearer than her eyes—alas,
Those pretty, tender, tear-dimmed eyes!

It knew its mistress quite as well
As she her mother; near her breast
It fluttered ever, chirping soft
And in her bosom found its rest.

Now does it seek the darksome way,
Whence none return nor message bring—
Accursed be, ye deadly shades,
That vanquish every lovely thing!

Ah, cruel deed! poor little bird
A-flutter in your gloomy skies!
From her you've snatched her pretty pet;
From me, the brightness of her eyes.

## V

Come, let us live and love, my dear,
A fig for all the pratings drear
Of sour old sages, worldly wise.
Aye, suns may set again to rise;
But as for us, when once our sun
His little course of light has run,
An endless night we'll sleep away.
Then kiss me, sweet, while kiss we may.
A thousand kisses, hundreds then,
And straightway we'll begin again—
Another thousand, hundreds more,
And still a thousand as before,
Till hundred thousands we shall kiss,
And lose all count in drunken bliss,
Lest green-eyed envy, in dull spite,
Should steal away our deep delight.

## VII

You ask me, love, how many kisses
Shall surfeit me with burning blisses.
As many as the grains of sand
That burn on Afric's spicy strand
Between Jove's shrine of mystic gloom
And ancient Battus' sacred tomb,
Or as the countless stars that light
Sweet secret loves in moonless night.
So many kisses, not one less,
Might soothe Catullus' mad distress.
And let no curious gossip cloy
With evil tongue our perfect joy.

## VIII

Catullus, cease to play the fool,
Consider what is past as past,
Bright days have shown for you, 'tis true;
Such days, you know, can never last.

Bright days have shown—ah, that was when
You danced attendance to the maid,
More truly loved by you, of course,
Than e're was loved a heartless jade.

And then how many happy days
Were passed in loving by you both;
You, loyal, eager, ardent, keen,
The maiden, also, nothing loth.

But now the maid no longer cares;
Then, what do you care? Never sigh,
Nor follow after when she flees,
Be obdurate and say goodby.

But as for you, reluctant girl,
Alone you'll sit and grieve all day;
For who will love you, call you fair,
When your Catullus stays away?

## IX

Veranus, best of all my friends,
Had I ten thousand others,
You're coming home, to your own hearth,
Your mother and dear brothers.
You're coming home—oh, happy thought!
I'll see you safe and hear you
Tell happy tales of far-off lands,
The while we're gathered near you.
Your arms about my neck, I'll press
On lips and eyes fond kisses—
Oh, happy men o'er all the earth,
Who knows such joy as this is?

## XIII

Come dine with me, Fabullus, do.
You shall dine well, I promise you,
If Fates are kind, and if you bring
Along with you the needful thing—
A dinner bountiful and fine,
A pretty girl, new salt, old wine,
And topping all a hearty laugh,
Mirth, jest, and wit and friendly chaff—
If these you bring, old friend, I swear,
That you shall dine on royal fare.
Catullus' purse is full—but hold!
Of musty cobwebs—now don't scold;
For in his turn, he'll offer you
A pure delight both rare and new,
An unguent, perfume—what you will—
No name its qualities can fill,
More fragrant, elegant, more sweet,
Than ever you have chanced to meet.
A balm in which the gods might lave,
Which Venus to my mistress gave.
You'll say, when once you've smelled the stuff,
I haven't praised it half enough,
And pray the gods, without repose,
To make you nothing else but nose.

NOTE.—Unguents and perfumes, together with garlands, were valued by the ancient Romans at their feasts quite as highly as the viands.

## XIV

Did I not love you more than my own eyes,
Sweet Calvus, for this gift I'd hate you quite,
With all of old Vatinius' spleen and spite.
What have I done or said, in any wise,
That you should kill me off with this vile verse?
And may misfortune hit the miscreant hard
Who sent to you the book of such a bard;
Unless, as I suspect, 'twas Sulla's curse—
A pedant, he, and critic who might send
A book like this and call it witty stuff.
Then I don't care, it can't be bad enough;
It serves you right for having such a friend.
Great gods! the wretched and accursed smutch!
And you must send the thing to me straightway,
That I be bored to death the live long day,
On Saturnalia too—this is too much!
Don't think, my witty friend, I'm done with you;
At dawn straight to the book stalls shall I fly,
And gather all the vile stuff I can buy,
Suffenus, Caecii, the whole rank crew,
And pay you back in kind, with interest too.
Meanwhile, farewell—ye would-be bards depart
To that dark place from which ye drew your art,
And take your darling books along with you!

## XXVI

Due on my fair estate there falls
Not north wind, south wind, east nor west;
But there falls due ten thousand pounds,—
All winds at once—oh shrivelling pest!

## XXVII

Come boy, and pour for me a cup
Of old Falernian. Fill it up
With wine, strong, sparkling, bright, and clear;
Our host decrees no water here.
Let dullards drink the Nymph's pale brew,
The sluggish thin their blood with dew.
For such pale stuff we have no use;
For us the purple grape's rich juice.
Begone, ye chilling water sprite;
Here burning Bacchus rules tonight!

## XXX

Art thou, Alfenus, false, forgetful, too,
To friend and comrade faithless, insincere?
Can hearts grow cold to what was once held dear,
And memory fail, that once was kind and true?

To bind me to thy soul, with promise sweet,
And then betray me when by ills beset—
And dost thou dare, false-hearted, to forget
The very gods are wroth at such deceit?

Thou, thou, in my deep need, couldst yet deceive,
Thou who didst bid me trust thee to the end,
Didst pledge thy faith to be my constant friend!
Alas, whom shall men trust, in whom believe?

By soft persuasion didst thou win my love,
And pledge by every vow that men can swear,
Then tossed thy words into the empty air,
A sport for wanton winds and clouds above.

Hast thou forgotten faith and loyalty
And friendship that doth love and mourn thee yet?
The gods are mindful most when men forget—
Take heed lest they, at last, remember thee.

## XXXI

Fair Sirmio, thou art the very eye
Of all the verdant isles that blooming lie
'Neath Neptune's sway, in limpid lake asleep,
Or raise rough crags against the surging deep.
How gladly do I visit thee again,
And leave behind the drear Bithynian plain
And Thynia, where I've toiled the long year through,
Far from the fairest spot 'neath heaven's blue.
Oh, what is sweeter than, when toil is past,
To come back home, the mind care-free at last,
The foreign labors done, the rest well-earned,
To seek the welcome couch for which we've yearned?
This, this, alone rewards us for dull toil.
Hail, lovely Sirmio! dear native soil,
Rejoice; thy lord's returned—Ye Lydian lake
Give answer, bid your rippling waves awake
To laughter; ye light winds waft joy along,
And let the whole house ring with mirth and song!

## XXXIV

Goddess of the crescent moon,
Guardian of youth's radiant noon,
Hail to thee, Diana!
Maidens pure as lilies white,
Youths as spotless as the light,
Let us sing Diana!

Daughter of Latona's love,
Whiter than fair Venus' dove,
Better loved by mortals;
Chaste child of Saturnian Jove,
Cradled in an Olive grove
Near the Delian portals.

Born to be untouched and free,
Mistress of the wild-wood tree,
Goddess of the mountains,
Spirit, too, of light and shade,
Sunny slope and dusky glade,
Sprite of laughing fountains.

Tenderer tasks are also thine,
Goddess of the hill and pine,
Sweeter than all others:
Thou, with gentle look and mild,
Smilest on the new-born child,
Patron of young mothers.

By thy shining lunar light,
Thou dost mark the season's flight
For the farmer's pleasure;
Sendest, too, the quickening rain,
Fruitful vine, and golden grain
Bountiful in measure.

Goddess of all kindliness,
By whatever name addressed,
Hail to thee, Diana!
Guard and save our ancient race,
By the favor of thy grace,
While we sing Diana.

## XXXV

Fly little note, without delay,
Find out Caecilius and say
To this sweet poet, blithe and gay,
Catullus asks that he, straightway,
His swift course to Verona take,
Though he must leave fair Como's lake
And, too, (a task, perchance, more hard
To ask of this erotic bard)
A maiden fairer than the skies
Beneath whose smiles Lake Como lies,
A maiden whose white arms will press
About his neck with soft caress,
And seek to hold him when he tries
To go—who'll plead with lips and eyes.
And this I greatly fear, in sooth,
If rumor hath told me the truth.
They say her love for him hath sprung
From hearing his sweet verses sung;
That since Caecilius first came,
With his sweet songs and set aflame
Her tender heart, her soul hath known
No thought but him and him alone.
Methinks, my friend, a maid so rare
Must needs thy tender heart ensnare.
A girl whose taste can so esteem
Thy masterpiece hath caught, I ween,

A bit of Sappho's grace and fire
And nobly kindled thy desire.
Nor should I wonder, rather blame,
If thou wert cold to such a flame.
Yet, if a poet can be wise,
Caecilius, flee those pleading eyes,
And hither come, post haste, to me,
For I've a new philosophy,
Compact of wisdom, wit, and sense,
'Gainst every ill a sure defense.
A mutual friend hath thought it out
And brought it here to talk about.
We wait thy coming eagerly,
To share this gift divine with thee.
'Twill charm thy mind with surer art
Than yonder maiden charmed thy heart.
And should'st thou fail us—woe betide!
But hold! why should Catullus chide?
I'd pardon much to such a maid,
And much to thee by her delayed.

## XXXVIII

I'm sick in body, mind, and heart,
More wretched hourly do I grow;
And not a line from you, my friend,
A bit of sympathy to show.

Not one poor, flimsy, little line—
A simple, easy thing to do—
A little line to say you care,
What wonder if I'm grieved with you?

And thus my love is slighted? Ah,
When such a little thing would please—
One little, kindly line of love,
Though sadder than Simonides.

NOTE.—Simonides was an elegiac poet of Ceos, a master of pathos.

## XLIII

Pshaw, little girl, you're much too small,
You've scarcely any nose at all.
Your feet are shapeless, fingers, too,
Your eyes a dull and faded blue,
With lips as parched as last year's peas,
And silly tongue, untaught to please.
They say that Formian calls you fair,
And that they praise you everywhere.
A dull and senseless age—ah me,
If they could Lesbia's beauty see!

## XLVI

Spring again is in the breezes!
Soft and warm and sweet they blow;
Hushed the equinoctial fury,
Lulled by Zephyr singing low.

And she calls to you, Catullus,
Hasten, bid your comrades rise,
Phrygian fields can charm no longer,
Nicaea wearies heart and eyes.

Dawn flames crimson, luring Eastward,
Asia's magic blooms unfold,
Golden cities nod and beckon,
Who can tell what joys they hold?

Wealth and life and love—and *something*
Still unknown and far more sweet;
Dreams outstrip the feet in spring time,
Youth gives wings to eager feet.

Say farewell to all your comrades,
Each must wander as he may,
Spring is here, and youth must follow
Life and love its own sweet way.

## XLVIII

Sweet Lesbia, let my kisses fall
On thy sweet eyes, nor say me nay,
Not though I kiss ten thousand times,
No niggard favor do I pray.

Ten thousand times ten thousand times
Were all too few—ah, love, be kind!
Let kisses fall with lavish waste,
Like blood red leaves in autumn wind.

## L

'Twas yesterday, Licinius mine,
While idling at our nuts and wine,
As gay young bloods think proper,
In sportive vein we teased the Muse
To scribble verses so profuse,
My faith, we scarce could stop her.

And when at last I left the place,
So fired with your rare wit and grace—
Or wine, you say—you dare it?—
I tossed upon my bed all night,
Impatient for the morning light
And you—by Jove, I swear it.

'Twas you I longed again to see,
To hear the clever repartee,
The thrust and answer ready.
I rose, my brain half dead for rest,
And scrawled these rhymes that might attest
My hand, at least, was steady.

Then speed the hour, sweet friend of mine,
When we shall meet at nuts and wine,
With wit and jest distracting.
And if you scorn a love like this,
Then, oh, beware of Nemesis,
A lady most exacting.

## LI

Then like a god he seems to me,
Aye, greater than the gods is he
Whom they permit to sit near thee,
With senses clear,
To hear thy rippling laugh and note
Thy sparkling eyes and shining throat,
Thy throbbing breast—ah, joys remote
And all too dear!

When I behold thee, Lesbia dear,
My voice grows dumb, a chilling fear
Benumbs my tongue; I cannot hear,
So sad my plight.
My failing limbs soft fires suffuse
And through my flesh so subtly ooze,
My very eyes their vision lose
In sudden night.

An icy sweat o'erspreads my frame,
Fierce trembling seizes me like flame,
Ah, cruel Venus, thine the blame!
In vain I cry
That thou avert my certain doom.
Breath fails; the light is lost in gloom,
Like grass that torrid winds consume,
I droop and die.

NOTE.—The last stanza usually appended to this poem is so obviously a misfit that it has been omitted in the translation. It is incredible that so finished and faultless a writer as Catullus shows himself in other poems, should have so stupidly blundered in this. It is doubly incredible if we accept this as a translation of the well known Sapphic ode in the same strain. The first three stanzas of the two poems are almost identical. It is hardly probable, then, that Catullus would so flagrantly have departed from the original in the fourth. Therefore, we have taken the liberty to adapt for the last stanza the general sense of Sappho's verses. It is far more probable that the original fourth stanza of Catullus was lost than that he made such a blunder in taste and feeling.

## LII

Why wait for death, Catullus, why not be done
with life?
Corruption in the Curule chair, and in the Senate
strife.
Venality is honored, and bribery is rife,
Why wait for death Catullus, why not be done
with life?

## LXV

Worn out with sorrow that finds no relief,
And crushed beneath a load of endless care,
Hortalus, friend, I ask thee to forbear;
I cannot woo the Muses in my grief.

And fain I'd send thee joyous songs and bright,
And fain remember happy things once more;
Thou knowest, how late, a flood from Lethe's shore
O'erwhelmed my brother in its chilling night.

My brother, best beloved, than life more dear,
Torn from my sight, entombed in foreign land,
Oh shall I never see thee, touch thy hand,
And never hear thee speak, nor feel thee near?

Yet always shall I love thee, always sing
Songs saddened by thy death, of minor note,
Such songs as Philomel pours from her throat,
Bewailing Itys dead by Daulian spring.

And so, Hortalus, unto thee I send
These sweeter strains by sweeter singer wrought,
Lest thou shouldst think Catullus loved thee not,
And with a brother I should lose a friend.

NOTE.—Unable, because of the grief caused by his brother's death, to send some promised verses to his friend Hortensius Ortalus, Catullus sends this epistle accompanied by some translations from Callimachus.

## LXVIII A

O'erwhelmed by cruel misfortune,
Oppressed by chilling fears,
From out the depths, thou sendest me
This letter writ in tears.

The dark night brings no respite,
Since thou art left forlorn
To toss upon thy lonely couch
Until the darker morn.

The old familiar poets,
That once brought thee delight,
No longer soothe thy weary mind,
That watches out the night.

And thou dost ask of friendship
What love nor verse can give—
Hope in thy bitter loneliness,
The why and how to live.

Dear friend, how fain I'd aid thee,
And send thee sweet relief;
Yet thou must know that I, as thou,
Am plunged in blackest grief.

Could one bright ray still reach me,
'Twould be that thou didst send,
In thy dark hour, this tender plea
To me, thy heart's best friend.

Oh, seek not with the hopeless
To find sweet hope, nor ask
That joy shall spring from misery—
That were too grim a task.

Time was when youth's glad spring time
Led me with flowery feet
To drink where Song's clear fountains spring,
And taste Love's bitter-sweet.

Now all delight has perished,
Lost in the awful night
That rose from Orcus' gloom and tore
My brother from my sight.

Oh, brother so beloved,
All joy with thee has fled,
And all our house, its very heart
And soul, with thee lie dead.

All things thy fond love fostered
When we walked side by side—
The verse I loved, the joys I sought—
With thee, dear one, have died.

Dear friend, the joy thou cravest,
I cannot offer thee;
Thou wilt forgive—how can I send
What grief has reft of me?

And say not, at Verona,
I languish dull and cold,
What solace for my weary heart
Could all the city hold?

My books and all my treasures,
At Rome are left behind;
That neither joy nor book I send,
Pray think me not unkind.

A book of verse I'd send thee
To speed one leaden hour,
As all thy bitter pain I'd cure,
If it were in my power.

Dost think, friend, I had waited
Until thy plea was read?
Sooth, long ago, to ease thy grief,
My love unasked had sped.

NOTE.—According to the most reasonable evidence this letter was written to Manlius, who was staying at or near Verona, Catullus' paternal home, whither the young poet himself had retired in grief at the death of his brother.

Manlius has written to Catullus in deep distress, the cause of which is not known, but conjectured to be grief at the death of his young wife. He has asked that Catullus send him books or poems of his own making to beguile his grief.

## LXX

My mistress says she'd wed with me
If Jove himself had sought her;
She says—but write what woman says
In winds and running water.

## LXXII

Ah, Lesbia, thou wert wont to say
Catullus' love alone held thee,
And should Jove's self thy beauty lure,
Before his favor mine should be.

I loved thee then beyond the love
Of man for maid; I held thee fair
Not only with a lover's hope,
But with a father's tender care.

But now I know thee as thou art;
And though thy loveliness still charms,
Thy faithlessness makes thee despised,
And keeps thee from these longing arms.

And dost thou ask how this can be?
Such wrongs beget such deep distress,
That though compelled to love thee more,
I'm also forced to like thee less.

## LXXIII

Then cease to strive to win esteem,
Or think another fair;
The whole world's thankless, selfish, mean,
There's none who truly care.
Good deeds but weary, nay, far more,
They even oft offend;
No enemy so bitter quite,
As he who was a friend.

## LXXVI

If man finds solace to his woe,
When fell misfortune strikes him low,
In consciousness of rectitude
And loyal, honest attitude
Toward god and man, Catullus, thou
Might ease thy anguished heart-ache now,
Might hope some joys for thee remain,
Dispite thy baffled love's cruel pain.
In kindness wast thou ever slow,
Or didst thou ever fail to show
Devotion to her least caprice?
Thy love didst mightily increase,
Till every thought that thou didst own
Was lost in her and her alone.
What was it thou didst do or say
That caused her love to turn away?
Ah, surely, all that man could do
Thou didst—Ah well, if this be true,
Why suffer more this sharp regret,
The gods have willed it so—and yet,
Ah, love, I cannot let thee go!
Thou knowest I have loved thee so,
And thou art all my life to me,
I know no life apart from thee.
Jove's self could not forget to sigh
If he had ever loved as I.

What can't be done, I still must do—
Forget, if I would live life through.
Then, if there be a god above
Who pities unrequited love,
Thou god, if thou canst feel or care
For mortal anguish—hear my prayer!
If ever I have done a deed
That ministered to mortal need,
Behold my utter wretchedness,
And lift from me this black distress.
This cursed love creeps through my frame,
Consuming with its deadly flame
My heart's last joy; my soul lies dead,
And I, a shade, move in its stead.
No more I ask what once I yearned—
That my love love me in return,
Nor yet a thing that could not be—
That she be worthy now of me.
I only ask, great gods above,
Ye free me from this deadly love!

## LXXXVII AND LXXV

No woman, Lesbia, can say she's been so loved as
thou,
Nor can she claim so true a heart as mine has been,
I vow.

Yet, by thy perfidy, my love, my mind is brought so
low
My heart so in devotion lost, alas, I only know

I could not like thee once again should'st thou full
spotless be;
Yet, dear, do what thou wilt, and I must still keep
loving thee.

NOTE.—These verses are usually edited as two fragments. However, some commentators put them together and they read much better so.

## LXXXVI

Now, Quintia is handsome to many a vulgar eye,
Tall, straight, she is, and fair and round—but
*handsome,* I'll deny.
No charm has she, nor piquancy, and not a grain
of grace,
In all her large and buxom frame, nor in her stolid
face.
Let men of taste behold my love, my Lesbia, and see
What beauty is in form and face in dame of high
degree.
What grace of motion, poise of head, what glances,
piercing sweet;
From shining hair, she's perfect all, to shapely little
feet.
It puzzles me, I must confess, how others dare
appear,
Whatever beauty they may boast, when Lesbia is
near.
For such her perfect loveliness, e'en Venus must
admit
The sex can claim no single charm but she has stolen
it.

## XCII

Fair Lesbia, when I am not by,
Abuses me most sadly;
Whereat I smile, by this I know
The lady loves me madly.

How do I know? Ah well, perchance,
It's lover's intuition—
Don't I berate her just as hard,
Yet love her to perdition?

## XCVI

If into the silent tomb can steal
Some tenderness, some thought devine,
If aught from this life the dead can feel,
Then, Calvus, be this solace thine.

When we mourn old friends with longing heart;
For dear dead loves in anguish cry,
Oh, there, do they feel the hot tears start,
Touched by a love that cannot die?

If this be, Calvus, thy sweet girl wife,
There in the tomb shall less grief know
For her spring time lost, her broken life,
Than joy in thy love that loved her so.

Note.—Licinius Calvus, a poet, was one of Catullus' closest friends and one in whom he found the happiest companionship. They often wrote verses together in friendly rivalry. The sprightly little satire, XIV, was addressed to this same Calvus in return for his present of a badly written book that had fallen into his hands. The tender verses above were written by Catullus in sympathy and consolation for the untimely death of Calvus' young wife, Quintilia.

## XCIX

Once while you played, my pretty miss,
I snatched from you a honeyed kiss—
Oh, nectar is not sweeter!
Yet short my bliss, and swift I paid;
The haughty, saucy little maid
Was wroth I so should treat her.

An hour or more on bended knee,
I prayed that she would pardon me—
For how could one resist her?
With angry little finger tips
She rubbed and scoured her coral lips,
Lamenting that I'd kissed her.

The while she tortured my desire
With blood red mouth and eyes afire—
What though the minx seemed artless?
She knew she had me on the rack,
What could I do?—Alas, alack,
That girls should be so heartless!

If stolen kisses, nectar sweet,
Be turned to gall, in sure defeat,
By torture such as this is;
Such brief bliss I would fain forego,
And swear by all the gods I know
To never more steal kisses.

## CI

Across wide lands, across a wider sea,
To this sad service, Brother, am I bourn
To pay thee death's last tribute and to mourn
By thy dead dust that cannot answer me.
This, this alone is left—ah, can it be
Thy living self blind chance from me has torn,
That cruel death has left me thus forlorn,
And thou so loved, dear Brother, lost to me?
Still, must I bring, as men have done for years,
These last despairing rites, this solemn vow,
Here offered with a love too deep to tell,
And consecrated with a brother's tears.
Accept them, Brother, all is done—and now
Forever hail, forever fare thee well.

## CII

If ever friend has trusted friend
Whose faith is tried and true,
Discretion proved, allegiance firm,
Cornelius, it is you.

My tongue is bound, as by an oath,
A secret to defend;
The very god of Silence I,
When once I've pledged a friend.

## CVII

If ever answer came to ceaseless prayer,
When hope was dead and longing well-nigh spent,
Oh, doubly dear the gifts the gods then lent
To heal the heart consumed with anxious care.

So Lesbia have you been restored to me,
Who longed, yet dared not hope such grace as this.
You came, at your sweet will—oh wonderous bliss!
You came, my golden love, wide-armed and free.

Ah, fair white day with happiness replete,
Bright day that brought my dear love back again,
What greater joy can come to mortal men,
What gift life hold that could be half so sweet?

## CIX

Oh Lesbia, my life, you promised me,
This love of ours should be forever true,
Forever true and happy—can there be
Such perfect joy bestowed on mortal two?

Yet grant, great gods, she promised from her soul,
And spoke with all the ardor of her heart,
That I may keep her mine while season's roll,
And all life perish, e'er we two should part!